

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EUR-12 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03
TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 EPG-02 SIL-01
OMB-01 OES-07 DHA-02 ACDA-07 /112 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6842
INFO AMEMBASSY VICTORIA

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINS PINT PDIP PDEV EAID ECON EFIS ELAB SHUM MP UR FR US
SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - JULY 8

REF: PORT LOUIS 0708

SUMMARY: PORT LOUIS 726 PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THIS CABLE. END
SUMMARY.

1. ON JUNE 30 MAJRITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) LEADERS JUGNAUTH AND BERENGER GAVE A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE TO COUNTER CONCERNS ABOUT THE APRTY'S TRUE INTENTIONS. JUGNAUTH REPEATED THAT THE MMM IS DEDICATED TO PURSUING THE ELECTORAL AND CONSITIUTIONAL ROAD TO POWER. HE REVEALED THAT RAMGOOLAM HAD TRIED TO CONVINCE HIM THAT A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY WOULD BE THE BEST MEANS TO FACT THE "CRISIS" THAT THE COUNTRY WILL SHORTLY HAVE TO ENDURE. JUGNAUTH AGREED THAT THERE WOULD BE A CRISIS BUT SAID THAT THE MMM WOULD HELP THE COUNTRY EMERGE FROM IT BY BEING A CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION, AND NOT BY RESORTING TO "SYSTEMATIC OBSTRUCTION" OF THE GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO HIM, UNDER GOVERNMENTS OF NATIONAL UNITY IT IS THE POOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE TO PAY. THE MMM COULD NOT JOIN THE PRESENT BOVERNMENT BECAUSE IT IS RIGHTIST AND WILL ALWAYS BE RIGHTIST,
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THE MMM PRESIDENT DECLARED.

2. BERENGER REPEATED HIS EARLIER STATEMENT ABOUT HIS DEVOTION TO THE ELECTORAL ROUTE FOR ACHIEVING POWER, AND ADDED THAT IN MAURITIUS ELECTIONS ARE HELD; SO THE SITUATION IS NOT COMPARABLE TO THAT OF THE SYCHELLES, WHERE MANCHAM BROUGHT ABOUT HIS OWN DOWNFALL BY PLANNING TO POSTPONE ELECTIONS. BERENGER SAID

RAMGOOLAM NOW IS RETREATING FROM THE IDEA OF ESTABLISHING A REPUBLIC WITH A PRESIDENT HOLDING EXECUTIVE POWERS BECAUSE HE FEARS THIS COULD LEAD TO A COUP D'ETAT. THE MMM OPPOSES THAT KIND OF REPUBLIC, BERENGER SAID, BUT FAVORS ONE WITH A FIGUREHEAD, POWERLESS PRESIDENT. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, BERENGER ADMITTED THAT THERE IS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF "UNREST" WITHIN THE MMM, BUT, HE SAID, THIS IS A SIGN THAT DEMOCRACY IS PRESENT ALSO.

3. AT A LABOR PARTY RALLY WEEKEND ACTING PRIME MINISTER RINGADOO ATTRIBUTED THE PARTY'S DEFEAT BY THE MMM LAST DECEMBER TO A POOR CHOICE OF CANDIDATES IN SOME CASES BY LABOR. (RINGADOO WAS HEAD OF THE PARTY'S CANDIDATE SELECTIONS COMMITTEE AT THAT TIME.) HE SAID THE NEW, YOUNG ASSEMBLY MEMBERS ELECTED BY LABOR WOULD CORRECT THIS PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE. HE LABELLED BERENGER "ENEMY NUMBER ONE" AND ACCUSED HIM OF PLANNING TO INSTALL A DICTATORSHIP IN THE COUNTRY, IN IMITATION OF THE DICTATORSHIP HE EXERCISES WITHIN THE MMM.

4. THE NATION REPORTED THAT AS A RESULT OF A REPORT BY THE SECURITY SERVICES, SPECIAL MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN TO PREVENT THE INFILTRATION OF ARMS AT THE AIRPORT AND BY SEA FROM FOREIGN SHIPS USING PLEASURE CRAFT AS COURIERS.

5. INDEPENDENT L'EXPRESS OF 6 JULY FEATURED ANOTHER STORY ON THE COOLNESS OF SOVIET-MAURITIAN RELATIONS, APPARENTLY BASED, LIKE THE EARLIER ONES, ON A GOVERNMENT BACKGROUNDER. CONFIDENTIAL

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THE STORY SAID THE GOM HAS DECLINED A DELIVERY OF 200 TONS OF FISH BY A SOVIET VESSEL BY REVOKING AN IMPORTER'S PERMIT ALREADY ISSUED. THE GOM EXPLAINED THE ACTION TO THE SOVIET EMBASSY ON THE BASIS THAT THERE IS ALREADY SUFFICIENT FISH ON THE LOCAL MARKET. THE NEWSPAPER SAID GOM AUTHORITIES HAVE LET IT BE KNOWN THAT THE REAL REASON IS TO SIGNAL GOM DISPLEASURE WITH CERTAIN SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN MAURITIUS. THE ACTION WAS RELATED TO THE GOM'S ABROGATION OF THE FISHING ACCORD WITH THE USSR. ACCORDING TO THE PAPER, THE SOVIETS STILL WANT TO RENEW THE ACCORD AND HAVE TRIED TO START A DIALOGUE BY OFFERING TO PAY PART OF THE COST OF REOPENING THE PORT OF MAHEBOURG AS A FISHING BASE AND BY PROPOSING A GIFT OF TWO TRAWLERS, PROVIDED THE GOM WILL FINANCE THE CREWS. THE GOM REGARDS THESE OFFERS WITH A GREAT DEAL OF SKEPTICISM, L'EXPRESS SAID.

6. THE FRANCO-MAURITIAN MIXED COMMISSION HELD A REGULAR BI-ANNUAL MEETING HERE LAST WEEK FOR TWO DAYS TO DECIDE ON FRENCH AID PROGRAMS FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS. MAURITIUS WILL RECEIVE ABOUT 150 MILLION RUPEES IN AID IN THE COMING YEAR, A BIT LESS THAN HALF IN GRANTS AND THE REST IN LOW-INTEREST LOANS. PRINCIPAL PROJECTS APPROVED INCLUDED A TECHNICAL LYCEE,

A RICE CULTURE PROJECT, SUPPORT FOR FISHING COOPERATIVES, PARTIAL FINANCING OF THE QUATRE SOEURS DAM, GENERATORS FOR THE CENTRAL ELECTRICITY BOARD, CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR THE HOTEL TRAINING SCHOOL, ELECTRIC SUPPLY FOR RODRIGUES ISLAND, TOW ROAD STUDIES, A MAPPING SURVEY, BOOKS AND PEDAGOGICAL MATERIALS FOR SEVERAL INSTITUTES, AMBULANCES, RESTORATION OF THE ROSE HILL MUNICIPAL THEATER, AND AN EXPOSITION ON THE TWO AND A HALF CENTURES OF FRANCO-MAURITIAN RELATIONS. SOME OF THE GRANT AID ALSO FINANCES SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDY IN FRANCE AND FRENCH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PERSONNEL.

7. SEVERAL PAPERS POINT TO INCREASING PROBLEMS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THE WAKE OF FIRINGS OF WORKERS BY A NUMBER OF FIRMS. LE MAURICIEN SAYS THAT BOTH MANAGEMENT AND THE TRADE UNIONS
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AGREE THAT A GRAVE ECONOMIC RECESSION MAY BE DEVELOPING. THE MINISTER OF LABOR, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE JULY 5, SAID ABSENTEEISM AND LOW PRODUCTIVITY ARE HURTING FACTORIES IN THE FREE ZONE SO MUCH THAT THEY HAVE LOST IMPORTANT CONTRACTS AND AS A RESULT HAVE HED TO REDUCE THEIR LABOR FORCES.

8. THE MMM'S TRADE UNION ARM, THE GENERAL WORKERS FEDERATION, HAS BEEN HARSHLY CRITICAL OF THE BURGEONING DISMISSALS OF WORKERS BY A NUMBER OF FIRMS. LE MILITANT SAYS THE GWF IS GOING TO PROPOSE A "(0)-," TO REVERSE THIS SITUATION, BUT ON DETAILS HAVE BEEN FORTHCOMING. THE GWF AND THE PAPER HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF LABLR MINISTER MOHAMED, WHOM THEY LABEL THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THE UNION LEADERS HAVE MET WITH MOHAMED AND THE EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM. THE GWF TALKS ABOUT THE "CRISIS" OF MAURITIUS' CAPATALIST ECONOMIC SYSTEM, BUT HAS BEEN SHORT ON SOLUTIONS.

9. LE MAURICIEN REPORTED THAT BECAUSE OF THE "ECONOMIC CRISIS" THE GOVERNMENT HAS ORDERED ALL MINISTRIES AND SERVICES TO REDUCE THEIR

EXPENDITURES BY TEN PER CENT FROM THE AMOUNTS VOTED IN THE CURRENT BUDGET. THE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO SAVE 100 MILLION RUPEES IN THIS FASHION, ABOUT EQUAL TO THE ANTICIPATED BUDGET DEFICIT.

10. AS IN PAST YEARS, MBC/TV AND RADIO BROADCAST A STATEMENT BY THE AMBASSADOR ON THE OCCASION OF THE JULY 4 ANNIVERSARY. THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S ADDRESS WAS HUMAN RIGHTS, PLACING OUR CURRENT EFFORT IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND EXPLAINING WHAT MOTIVATES OUR CAMPAIGN. HALF OF THE DIALY NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED STORIES REPORTING THE JULY 4 STATEMENT, IN ALL CASES HIGHLIGHTING ONE BRIEF PASSAGE WHICH PRAISED MAURITIUS' HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD.

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11. PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM IS SPENDING TWO WEEKS IN FRANCE
AND ENGLAND FOLLOWING THE OAU SUMMIT TO HAVE A REST AND A
COMPLETE MEDICAL CHECK-UP.

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